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KEENAN, Robert B.

METHODS OF TEACHING EQUITATION

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THESIS

METHODS OF TEACHING EQUITATION

Submitted by

Robert B. Keenan
(B. Ed., University of Miami, 1948)

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

1949

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I THE PROBLEM

The Purpose of Study: The purpose of this study is to present in written and pictorial form a satisfactory method of teaching the fundamentals of riding.

Statement of Problem: More specifically, this study will approach the problem of equitation through:

1. The use of written material which will act as a guide for the beginner in developing the basic skills of horsemanship.

2. The use of motion pictures which will show the proper mechanics of riding and the safety practices which should be followed.

Scope of Study: This study will be limited to the instructorial techniques suitable for the child or the adult who has little or no previous experience in riding. The methods herein employed are designed to carry the beginner through the stage of training where he will be equipped to handle a horse without assistance safely and with reasonable skill. It is not designed to provide the skills required for advanced equitation.

II HISTORY OF EQUITATION

The use of animals, especially horses, as a means of transportation has been known since the earliest times. Greeks and Romans rode without saddles and were expert horsemen. Numidian cavalry were in great demand as mercenary troops, riding barebacked and without bridle. Strangely enough, however, horses were never used extensively by Jews.

"In the 16th century Pignatelli at Naples founded his famous academy of horsemanship, and the Italian school was so generally recognized that Henry VIII and other monarchs had Italian masters of the horse. The Continental 'haute ecole' developed from the teachings of these early masters. The duke of Newcastle's 'Methode nouvelle de dresser les chevaux' (1648) was the standard work of the day, and in 1761 the earl of Pembroke published his Manual of Cavalry Horsemanship. The Austrians at the imperial stables at Vienna and later the French at Saumur continued the 'haute ecole' system up to recent years. It, however, never really found favour in England. In a modified degree it is seen today at shows and at the Olympic games, as an example of extreme obedience and control of the horse. Though 'haute ecole' produced handiness and dexterity, the horse lost the activity required by the English. The horse's head maintained a fixed profile with a lofty head-carriage, overbent at the poll and balance permanently back, thus becoming cramped in its action and losing its powers of extension and speed. The necessity of handiness, but not at the expense of speed, was recognized by horsemen in Great Britain. Consequently certain 'aids' were adopted from the 'haute ecole' to obtain this desideratum. These 'aids' exist in the British Manual of Cavalry Training, vol. i. As opposed to the 'haute ecole' the modern conception of a horse's balance is as follows. 'A horse is said to be balanced when his own weight (and that of his rider) is distributed over each leg in such proportion as to allow him to use his powers with the maximum ease and efficiency at all paces.' The head and neck form the governing factors in weight distribution, and it is by their position that the horse carries his weight forward or backward as his paces are extended or collected. Modern horsemanship includes: (a) learning to

ride. (b) Making an animal handy as a hack or charger or for polo. (c) Schooling over fences. (d) Show jumping. (e) Riding to hounds. (f) Racing over fences or on the flat.

From Norman times through the Tudor, Stuart and Georgian reigns up to the early part of last century, riding was considered an essential part of a gentleman's education. The introduction of railways and later of motor cars has resulted in the retention of the riding horse merely for pleasure and sport. In spite of this there has been a large increase during recent years in the number of riders. All riding classes in horse shows are largely filled, including those for children, and in the hunting field the numbers have in no way diminished."[1]

III REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON EQUITATION

Colonel J. J. Boniface[2] covers the basic and essential points to learn and master in order to become a proficient rider. He describes in detail - Initial Training of Horse and Rider; Riding at the Walk, the Trot, the Lope; Canter, Gallop and Run; Riding on the Open Range; Riding at the Artificial Gaits, Over the Jumps and Riding Bucking Horses; The Elements of Rough Riding; Polo Playing; Endurance Riding; Famous Rides.

Margaret Cabell Self has written a series of books about horses and riding.

In the first book of the series, she[3] tells all about the horse - from the novice's purchase of an animal to the taking of blue ribbons in the show rings.

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1. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1937.
2. Col. J. J. Boniface, Riding, A. S. Barnes & Co., 1940.
3. Margaret Cabell Self, Horses, A.S. Barnes & Co., 1943.

She describes the characteristics and the uses of the more familiar breeds of horses found in this country, so that you are better able to select the best horse for your purpose.

The following topics are discussed: Selection of the Horse, Selection and Care of Equipment, The Stable, First Aid, Handling the Horse, Cause and Control of Vices, Riding, Driving, Starting the Child, The Show Ring.

In the second book of the series, Self[4] gives information on the breaking and training of colts, games and gymkhana contests, trail riding, hunting with bloodhounds, and military organization - in an effort to broaden the equestrian's technical knowledge. The following topics are discussed: Early Handling, First Lesson in Harness, Lessons in Jumping, Games to be Played in the Ring, Field Games, The Bloodhound, Training for the Hunt, Forming a Troup, Military Courtesy, Commands, Platoon Drill.

In the third book of the series, Self[5] presents specific advice on how to introduce the young child to his first pony, how to keep the intermediate rider interested, and how to handle the child with a definite fear of animals. The following topics are discussed: Parents as Teachers, Selecting the Proper Mount and Equipment, A System of Exercises and Tests to Stimulate the Pupil's Ambition and Interest, Jumping, Arranging a Children's Hunter Trials, Advantages to be Derived from Competing in Local Shows, Organized Riding for Older Children.

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4. Margaret Cabell Self, Fun on Horseback, A. S. Barnes & Co., 1945.

5. Margaret Cabell Self, Teaching the Young to Ride, A. S. Barnes & Co., 1946.

The fourth book of the series[6] was written to help those generally interested in horses and riding find out all they can about everything equestrian. For the tyro and expert alike - an encyclopedia of information about the horse from Paleolithic man to the present. The beginner learns the rudiments of riding, the lover of a specific breed find the history and origin of the breed, hunting and harness racing enthusiasts learn how and where these sports have developed and the many technicalities concerning them. More than one hundred illustrations amplify the text. An exhaustive bibliography and a comprehensive appendix of famous horses, money winners, winners of Hunt Meets complete the book.

In the fifth book of the series, Self[7] places before the beginner a logical progression of fundamentals as an aid to becoming a skilled horseman. The following topics are discussed: What Constitutes a Good Horseman, The Fundamental Characteristics of the Horse, The Modern Seat, The Walk, The Jog Trot and the Trot, The Collected Canter, The Gallop, Value and Importance of Bareback Work, Do's and Don'ts to Save Your Horse, Riding Etiquette.

Harry Disston[8], Colonel, United States Army Reserve, has produced a book which provides instructive and entertaining information in question and answer form about horses and the activities associated with them.

The following topics are discussed: General and Historical Anatomy and Stable Management, First Aid and Shoeing, Tack and Equitation, Horse Shows, Hunting, Flat Racing, Steeplechasing, Harness Racing, Polo, Cowboys and the West, The Cavalry, A Test of Horsemanship and Horsemastership, Outline for a Mounted Drill, Your Score.

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6. Margaret Cabell Self, The Horseman's Encyclopedia, A. S. Barnes & Co., 1946.
7. Margaret Cabell Self, Riding Simplified, A. S. Barnes & Co., 1948.
8. Harry Disston, Equestionnaire, A. S. Barnes & Co., 1947.

Lt. Col. W. E. Lyon[9] surveys topics and events of interest to every horseman. The following topics are included: The Steeplechase Season of 1946-47 by J. L. Hislop; Through the Eyes of a Broadcaster by Raymond Glendenning; Show Ponies in 1947 by R. S. Summerhays: The International Aspect of Show Jumping by H. M. Llewellyn; Foxhunting Finance by D. W. E. Brock; A Threat to Our Field Sports by J. W. Fitzwilliam; Results of the Classic Races and the Ascot Gold Cup; Show Jumping Championships - 1947; Selected Horse Show Results.

Captain Piero Santini[10,11], an Italian cavalry man, covers all phases of riding in his works. The following topics are discussed:

Learning to ride: Forward riding, The horse and tack, Mounting and dismounting, The reins and how to hold them, The Leg, Leads and diagonals, Gaits and paces, Backing and pulling up, The side saddle, Jumping, Falling.

Instructing and the instructor: The school or menage, The instructor, Pupils and classes, The assistants.

Rules for a riding competition: Cross saddle competition, control and guidance test, Jumping test.

Benjamin Lewis[12] produced a photographic essay. It advocates the balanced seat, and much of his book is given over to this topic. However, he does include mounting, dismounting and riding at different gaits. It is a good book, and well illustrated. The main criticisms of this book are the poor position of the feet in the photographs, and his methods of mounting and dismounting. They are definitely safety hazards. However, it is probably the best book on equitation for beginners as yet published.

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9. W. E. Lyon, The Horseman's Year 1947-48, A.S. Barnes & Co., 1948.
10. Piero Santini, Learning to Ride, Greenburg Co., 1941.
11. Piero Santini, The Forward Impulse, Huntington Press, 1936.
12. Benjamin Lewis, Riding, Garden City Publishing Co., 1938.

CHAPTER II

TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

1. Tentative outlines of methods were made to be used in teaching the fundamentals of riding.

2. Two professional riders and one stable owner, who has operated a riding stable for fifty years, were consulted. Following this, revisions in the methods were made.

3. Further revisions were made after these methods had been tested by five show riders and five other persons who had never ridden before.

4. A questionnaire was prepared regarding safety, correctness and simplicity of method. A copy of the questionnaire together with the lessons (see following) was given to each member of a group of thirty persons. This group included professional and experienced riders and stable owners.

5. Twenty-eight questionnaires were returned and the tabulated results showed general agreement of opinion.

6. Motion pictures of the methods were made. Moreover, standard procedures for filming motion pictures were followed. The motion pictures represent a part of this study and will be filed in the Boston University School of Education Library.

LESSONS FOR TEACHING EQUITATION

I. How to Mount

1. Approach the horse from the front end.
2. Walk up to the horse's head on the left side of the horse.
3. Gather the reins in your left hand.
4. Pull the horse's head slightly towards you.
5. Face the horse's rear and place the ball of your left foot in the stirrup iron.
6. Grasp the horse's neck with your left hand, and the front of the saddle (pommel) with your right hand.
7. Spring off the ground, and throw your right leg over the saddle, and at the same time release your grip on the saddle.
8. Place the ball of your right foot in the stirrup.
9. Adjust your seat in the saddle.

II. How to Hold the Reins

1. Gather the reins in both hands, line should be taut but not tight from horse's mouth to your hands. (Reins should never be hanging loosely.)
2. Cross the reins in front of you.
3. Hands should be close together, about waist high.
4. Hold your elbows in to your body, naturally, not rigidly.
5. At all times, your reins must be tight enough to "feel" the horses mouth, but never tight enough to excite him, or in some cases, stop him. There is scarcely an inch difference between comfort or discomfort for your horse.

   Exception: In the case of very small children or nervous be-

ginners it is permissable to allow the pupil to hold the reins in the left hand, grasping the saddle with the right until the fear is overcome.

III. Placement of Feet

1. The balls of your feet should be in the stirrup irons.
2. Place your toes up, your heels down, and without straining, point your toes toward the horse.
3. At no time, except when giving a command, should your heels be pressed into the horse.
4. At a walk, trot, canter, and gallop, the feet should always assume this position.

IV. Proper Seat, Balance, and Knee Grip

1. Reach in back of you on the saddle and see if there is room for four fingers. There should be.
2. Straighten your back, do not hold it rigid, just assume a natural, relaxed, but erect position.
3. Keep your head up, as you would when walking with correct posture.
4. Relaxation and confidence are the main factors in gaining balance.
5. As your confidence grows, so does your balance. However, if you keep a correct seat (follow given directions) in your saddle, you will find you are able to keep your balance with no effort.
6. Your knees and thighs are your means of staying on your horse. Keeping your feet in the correct position, press your knees and thighs into the saddle. At no time should you use the

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calfs of your legs for pressure to keep in the saddle.

7. This correct seat may be used for all bridle path riding.

V. How to Stop a Horse

1. Lean your weight back in the saddle against the reins.
2. Keep your hands waist high, do not raise them.
3. Push your feet slightly forward as you lean back.
4. This method throws your entire weight on the reins, rather than just your arms.
5. When your horse comes to a stop, resume your natural seat and do not continue to pull on the reins.

VI. How to Rein a Horse

A.

1. To turn your horse to the right, pull on the right rein.
2. To turn your horse to the left, pull on the left rein.
3. The harder you pull, the sharper your horse will turn, as the reins are very much like the steering wheel of an automobile.

B.

1. Without pulling back on the horse's mouth, move your hands to the left across the horse's neck when this is the desired direction, and vice versa when you wish to go to the right.
2. Do not allow your hands to separate or raise up above your waist when you move them from side to side.

VII. Posting

1. Lean slightly forward in the saddle.
2. Without changing the position of the legs or feet, raise your buttocks off the saddle, only high enough to clear it.
3. Lower yourself back into the saddle.
4. This should be practiced with the aid of an instructor saying

either up - down, feet - seat, or one - two, in order to gain the rhythm with the horse.

5. This should be practiced first at a walk, then at a trot.

VIII. Cantering

1. Keep the same position as in walking and keep your body relaxed.
2. Keep your knees and thighs pressed tightly to the saddle and allow your body to rock with the motion of the horse's back as he assumes the cantering gait.
3. When your horse is going to the right, to start him on his correct lead, turn him to the right, raise your left rein, and kick him with your right heel.
4. Follow the same procedure in reverse for the opposite direction.

IX. Balance and Confidence

1. You must relax.
2. For the first few lessons, (number depends on the nature of the pupil) you should walk your horse with an experienced instructor.
3. Become accustomed to leading, and feeding, your horse.
4. Overcome your fears.

X. How to Dismount

A.

1. Transfer both reins to your left hand.
2. Take both feet out of stirrup irons.
3. Put both hands on the front of the saddle.
4. Swing your right leg over the horse's back, and at the same time transfer your right hand to the back of the saddle.
5. Now you are ready to slide to the ground, without fear of being dragged if the horse starts quickly.

X. How to Dismount (cont'd.)

B.

1. Transfer both reins to your left hand.
2. Take your right foot out of the stirrup iron.
3. Put your left hand on the horse's neck and your right hand on the saddle pommel.
4. Swing your right leg over the horse's back and to the ground, turning your body in the air as you do this, so you are facing the horse's rear when your foot hits the ground. (Same as in mounting.)

XI. How to Tack up a Horse

1. You must always approach your horse from the left side. (Lesson I).
2. Keep your horse's halter on and put the reins over his head.
3. Remove the halter, and holding the crown piece of the bridle in your right hand, and the bit in the left hand, fit the bridle on the horse's head (holding the bit in flattened hand when forcing the horse's mouth open).
4. Buckle the throat latch, and if there is a curb chain, ask a person familiar with the horse how tight to hook it. Each horse is an individual in this respect. Some need a tighter curb than others.
5. Pick up the saddle - left hand holding front, right hand holding back, and drop it lightly (don't slap it) on the horse's back.

6. In settling it in the correct position, never slide up (towards the horse's head); always slide it back so as not to rub the horse's hair the wrong way.
7. If there is a martingale or other extra equipment, be sure to have a groom to instruct the correct way to put these attachments on your horse.
8. Buckle up the girth. In tightening the girth, you should be able to slide your hand between the girth and the horse's belly except at the brisket. Otherwise it is too tight.
9. Adjust your stirrups at an arm's length from saddle pommel to armpit.

XII. On the Bridle Path

1. When you have mastered all eleven previous lessons, you are ready to go on the bridle path (with an instructor).
2. Do not pass other riders except on the left side at a walk.
3. Do not trot or canter your horse up or down a hill.
4. Walk, trot, and canter your horse equal lengths of time so as not to tire him.
5. Never cluck at your horse in a group.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Following is a (1) numerical tabulation and (2) percentage tabulation of the twenty-eight questionnaires which were returned.

The results of this survey showed that in Safety and Correctness, the methods ranked high. In Ease of Learning, with the exception of Reining Horse, the methods again ranked high. A possible explanation of the disagreement of the Reining Horse phase is that two different methods were suggested. However, the data show that there was almost complete agreement among the twenty-eight experts contacted concerning the safety and correctness of the techniques employed.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary. The purpose of this study is to present in written and pictorial form a satisfactory method of teaching the fundamentals of riding.

Techniques and Procedures: Tentative outlines were made of methods to be used in teaching the fundamentals of riding. These outlines were revised several times after experienced personnel were consulted. A questionnaire was prepared regarding safety, correctness and simplicity of method. Copies of this questionnaire were given to thirty competent riders and stable owners. Twenty-eight questionnaires were returned and evaluated. Motion pictures were made of the correct riding fundamentals. These motion pictures will be available at the Boston University School of Education Library.

Conclusions. The data show that there was almost complete agreement among the twenty-eight experts contacted concerning the safety and correctness of the techniques employed. Moreover, in the opinion of nearly all the experts contacted, the methods of teaching were easy to learn.

Recommendations for Further Study:

1. Written material on safe and proper methods of teaching advanced equitation.
2. Motion pictures showing these advanced methods being applied to rider.

Table II

Questionnaire Responses Tabulated by Percent

	SAFETY		CORRECTNESS		EASE OF LEARNING (by this method of teaching as compared to other methods)		
	Safe	Unsafe	Correct	Incorrect	Easy	Moderate	Difficult
I Mounting	96%	4%	96%	4%	89%	7%	4%
II Holding the reins	100%	-	96%	4%	96%	-	-
III Feet	100%	-	100%	-	100%	-	-
IV Seat, Balance, Knee Grip	93%	-	7%	4%	82%	11%	7%
V Stopping Horse	100%	-	100%	-	96%	4%	-
VI Reining Horse	100%	-	100%	-	71%	29%	-
VII Posting	100%	-	100%	-	100%	-	-
VIII Cantering	100%	-	100%	-	100%	-	-
IX Balance & Confidence	100%	-	100%	-	100%	-	-
X Dismounting	93%	7%	96%	4%	93%	2%	7%
XI Tacking-up	100%	-	100%	-	96%	-	-
XII Bridle Path	100%	-	100%	-	93%	7%	-

Table I

Questionnaire Responses Tabulated Numerically

	SAFETY		CORRECTNESS		EASE OF LEARNING (by this method of teaching as compared to other methods)		
	Safe	Unsafe	Correct	Incorrect	Easy	Moderate	Difficult
I Mounting	27	1	27	1	25	2	1
II Holding the reins	28	-	27	1	27	-	-
III Feet	28	-	28	-	28	-	-
IV Seat, Balance, Knee Grip	26	2	27	1	23	2	2
V Stopping Horse	28	-	27	1	27	1	-
VI Reining Horse	28	-	28	-	28	-	-
VII Posting	28	-	28	-	28	-	-
VIII Cantering	28	-	28	-	28	-	-
IX Balance & Confidence	28	-	28	-	28	-	-
X Dismounting	26	2	27	1	26	1	1
XI Tacking-up	28	-	28	-	27	1	-
XII Bridle Path	28	-	28	-	26	1	1

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